

## PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION.

The Late Miss Charlotte Mason's Ideals.

By R. A. PENNETHORNE.

[In view of our recent critical review of the late Miss Mason's book, "An Essay Towards the Philosophy of Education," we are glad to publish the following statement of her views written by Miss Pennethorne, the organizing secretary of the Parents' National Educational Union.]

EDUCATIONAL public opinion in England has unfortunately been too often focused upon financial considerations and the difficulties of teaching in one school children whose parents' views on religious matters are terrible examples of "our unhappy divisions."

The old didactic "moral" education was founded quite logically on its basis, however faulty that may have been. It believed quite simply in beating out original sin, and expected children to be little, naughty and disobedient, and laid the onus of making them work, keeping their behaviour within conventional bounds, and of keeping rules and having laws obeyed, on the teacher, who might, in the last resource, see that force was used for this "righteous" end.

Many people, if obliged to state their views, would discover, to their astonishment, that they still do believe something very like that, only they do not like to hear of force being actively called in where moral suasion might suffice.

We know only too well that there is an opposing school of thought to-day which fears to teach any dogmatic religion, which fears to "repress" any tendency, which gives the young tendrils of the growing plant very little trellis-work to which to attach itself, and in the name of liberty and freedom leaves the child at the mercy of that worst tyrant, self.

In the midst of all these difficulties and opposing ideas a great woman, a practical teacher and a deep thinker, began in a modest way some thirty-five years ago to spread her teaching amongst those who were profoundly aware that the best was not being called forth from the children whom God sent here to be their best and to do their utmost.

She began by banding parents together to study the principles underlying home training, that they might make the phrase "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline and a life," a household reality. She then began to train teachers so that "the governors at home" should not be a reproach and a stumbling-block, but a preparer on sound lines of all future and continuous educational work. Her students and the work of the Union she founded are now to be found in very many schools as well, so that it is really possible for a child to begin to learn to read and write with the interest, habits and tastes already expanding which will become the life's work, or the recreative leisure of its old age. The scheme worked in all these homes and schools is well known now as the Parents' Union School programme. But all the work so prepared and carried out had a definite motive and intention, that all should be done "on a religious basis," the recognition that all knowledge is the gift of the Holy Ghost received from above, and must be returned to God in service.

This "recognition of the Divine" was the true spirit of the first Renaissance, whatever its later manifestations may have been, and lives before our eyes still in the frescoes of the "Vaulted Book" of the Spanish chapel of St. Maria Novella. It may be—who knows!—the inspiring spirit of a new Renaissance when men will no longer dismiss as "high-brow" a longing for the best and highest, or squabble over means to an end when they have realized that wisdom is above "kingdoms and thrones," namely, the marks, rewards, prizes and scholarships of the conventional scholastic career, which are indeed "added unto" the true student who has sought first the true Kingdom.

This conception of the Kingdom of God underlay all Charlotte Mason's teaching. But she herself was a humble and reverent Churchwoman, and never presumed to be pastor or teacher in the place of those trained and dedicated for life to the ministry of Sacraments and doctrinal authority.

So when the scheme for religious education which formed part of these school programmes was devised, she saw to it that the door was not thereby opened to indiscriminate private interpretations of the Scriptures. Children following this course would get a thorough knowledge of the Old and New Testaments in chronological sequence, so that the child should grow in knowledge and comprehension of its relationship to God as the race has done, but "talk" and "goody-goody platitudes," and "moralizing" by the teacher were expressly avoided, and definite books, written by those with authority, for guidance were suggested—Dummler's Commentary, or Paterson Bayly's Bible for the Young Series.

The books for Sunday reading gave a wide option of choice, remembering that people of every creed and race are members of the great educational Union which has grown out of her work. So one may find there lives

of the Saints, books on the Prayer Book and the Church's Year, Church History, and then such books of general edification and example as "The Parables from Nature" or "The Life of Livingstone," or some other modern worthy, by no means always a missionary.

Religion as a matter of personal experience was to her too intimate and sacred a matter for the interference of the lay teacher, and so she herself threw her own reflections on the Gospels into the form of verse—the six volumes called "The Saviour of the World," that they might not appear didactic but as the musings of one who felt that talent and opportunity must be dedicated in some way directly to the Master.

Those who were privileged to know her personally in the long years of her retirement, not from work, but from much active intercourse with the outside world which ill-health necessitated, felt that they were in the presence of one who knew of the world beyond the walls, and at the same time was a humble and devoted member of the Church Militant on earth.

To a great extent she was "a dreamer whose dreams came true," for her work has spread far and wide over the world, and is carried on in all British Dominions in Brazil, India, China, etc., but the dearest wish of her heart was realized when her work was largely taken up in the elementary schools of this country. Many are now realizing that all children are persons with the rights and duties and possibilities of our position as members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven; and all this not merely in a future sense of ultimate union with the Highest, but in an immediate and present sense of the power of reception and attainment of the best in art, literature, and the great laws of God for man. This unifying a personal opportunity is an educational recognition of that value of all souls in a redeemed world, which the Church has too often insisted on in loneliness, while the education of mind proceeded on the lines of class and purse distinctions.

It might be truly written of her, "Her children shall rise up and call her blessed," indeed, not only children, but all thinking and feeling educationalists who have longed to see the recognition of God as the inspirer of all knowledge and the author of our "good desires" re-enthroned in the world of materialized educational thought.

For

## DURRANT'S PRESS CUTTINGS,

St. Andrew's House, 32 to 34 Holborn Viaduct,  
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TELEPHONE: CITY 4963.

### Birmingham Post

38 New Street, Birmingham.

Cutting from issue dated.....23 JAN. 1925.....192

#### "A LIBERAL EDUCATION FOR ALL."

Whatever criticisms may be passed upon particular points of Miss Charlotte M. Mason, it cannot be denied that she deserved well of the educational commonwealth. Her trustees have just published the "Last Words" of this educationist in a volume entitled "An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education: A Liberal Education for All." (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.). Miss Mason believed that as religion can awaken souls, so education can convert to an intellectual conversion. It has done so over and over again, but the children have ordinarily been the children of educated persons. "It may be that the souls of all children are waiting for the call of knowledge to awaken them to delightful living." The enthusiasm for education becomes another form of the enthusiasm for humanity. The Rev. Dr. Edward Lyttelton writes a Foreword for Miss Mason's book, describing Miss Mason's aim. She "saw and in this volume has explained that the natural and only quite wholesome way of teaching is to let the child's desire of knowledge operate in the schoolboy, and guide the teacher . . . The chastening fact is that children learn best before we adults begin to teach them at all." Hence the necessity for a *rapprochement* of education and the way of nature. We must work that there may be no collapse of the desire of knowledge, between the years of seven and seventeen.

Miss Mason lays great emphasis on the idea that children are born persons. Authority and discipline are necessary, but are to be regulated by the respect due to personality. The Parents National Educational Union which Miss Mason founded, has for motto "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline and a life." She regards the mind as a spiritual organism, with an appetite for all knowledge. The idea is thoroughly opposed to specialisation at early stages. She adopts Comenius's dictum: "All knowledge for all men." She believes that the educability of children is much greater than has been ordinarily supposed. She greatly appreciates book-education, that is, if the books are of that "substantial world, both pure and good, round which, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood, our pastimes and our happiness will grow." Children must learn to follow the way of the will, and the way of the reason. And they must learn that as they become mature, the chief responsibility which rests on them as persons, is the acceptance or rejection of ideas. It will be seen that there is much of wisdom in this book, and it has the virtue of being readable by schoolmaster and parents.



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### Manchester Guardian

3 Cross Street, Manchester.

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Jan 28

1925

NEW BOOKS.

#### A THEORY OF EDUCATION.

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF  
EDUCATION. A Liberal Education  
for All. By C. M. Mason. London:  
Kegan Paul and Co. Pp. xxxi. 360.  
10s. 6d. net.

The title of this book is misleading. It promises more than the reader will find, but it presents a point of view that has no doubt been neglected in some of our systems of education and is worthy of serious criticism. It is well to have it restated by one who believed in it so ardently, whose insight and practical sagacity inspired the school at Ambleside, and who was able, by means of the organisation of the P.N.E.U., to guide the labours of so many parents and private teachers.

In the words of Dean Colet, whom she quoted, she prayed that the children should "prosper in good life and good literature." She held that a child educated himself in the pages of great writers. He must be left alone to meet these teachers in silence and so become familiar with their thoughts upon life and the universe. To this end, the books were to be read as they were written and not in selections, and, further, they were to be read once only, as a training in attention, and reproduced in some form afterwards, for in reproduction, she maintained, there must be creative effort. Stross was naturally placed upon literature and history, but she even went so far as to advocate the teaching of science through the medium of literary form, which she regarded as an incentive to thought, leading to investigation at a riper age. She preferred to study the "Water Babies" and the works of Huxley or Darwin before entering any laboratory. It was the content of the books, the ideas, that could inform and inspire, rather than the method of a subject, which, though it might make efficient students, nevertheless often left them starved of knowledge in those years when intellectual hunger was keenest. In the last decade Miss Mason had been directing her attention to the public elementary schools, and since some three hundred of these are now working her schemes, it becomes an urgent matter to examine the foundations of her belief, the details of her schemes, and the results of the application of them to conditions other than those in which the work was originally planned and carried out. We are not yet convinced that book-learning is suitable for all types of character, all grades of mentality, or in all social circumstances, but there will be many who agree with the author that we tend to underrate the intelligence of the child and his capacity to assimilate ideas and reflect upon them, and to waste the pregnant years between the ages of 12 and 14, when it is not an uncommon accomplishment to be able to read a page of print and to remember what has been read.

We already owe a debt to her for introducing into some elementary schools a supply of books worth reading. The text-books found in the average school certainly merit the disrespect with which they are treated—disfigured if opportunity allows, discarded at the first chance, and remembered, if at all, not by any words or thoughts within them, not even by their titles, but by the colour of their covers. We have indeed given the tools of learning to the child, and often nothing more. In this essay Miss Mason's last words of exposition have been gathered together. They were written, it is obvious, without time for revision, but they gain in value from the magnitude of the problem she proposed to tackle, as the trust is no doubt realised when they determined to publish.

F. L. B.



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Cutting from the

*Church Times*

Dated February

1925

Address of Journal

### EDUCATION.

*An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education. A Liberal Education for All.* By Charlotte M. Mason. (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.)

THE late Miss C. M. Mason was the founder of the Parents' National Educational Union. The ideals which are embodied in that society, and in the House of Education at Ambleside, were described in Miss Mason's previous writings, and are now expounded in full and systematic detail in this posthumous work. The education whose stimulus was fear of punishment or hope of reward, or affection for the teacher, has, it is assumed, broken down. The inspiration which it is suggested, is to take its place as a guide to the teacher and the ruling idea of the curriculum is the child's own desire for knowledge.

A considerable section of the book is taken up with practical application; Miss Mason shows how her ideals could be worked out in elementary schools, as well as in secondary and continuation schools.

This is a book which deserves to be considered seriously by educational reformers. We welcome particularly the recognition that an educational programme can only justify itself if it can be applied to the whole nation—to the children of the poor as well as those who are better off. But we deplore the atmosphere of incurable "faddiness" which Miss Mason introduces into the whole discussion—it clings to every meeting of the Parents' Union also—through her failure to recognize that children are born young.

Children are born persons, she insists, although we should have thought that the most obvious lesson of the revolution in psychology which has marked our generation is that personality is nobody's inheritance, but the most difficult of all tasks for every man. The result is that she postulates an impossible independence for the pupil, and only makes any education possible at all by smuggling back an influence of the teacher, camouflaged by such phrases as the atmosphere of environment, the discipline of habit, and the presentation of living ideas, which on her own principles ought not to be allowed. Because children are children, they have to be taught.

Miss Mason's ideas about religion are Protestant and vague. "Material things do not have much effect on the mind," she says. No Sacraments! "The Bible is the oracle of God and our sole original source of knowledge concerning the nature of Almighty God." No Church, therefore—and, apparently, no individual religious experience worth mentioning. "Such summing-up of Christian teaching as is included in the so-called dogmas of the Church." The word "so-called" seems to be nonsense.

It is a pity that in many walks of life eager reformers think they can experiment with human nature—that most explosive thing!—without humbling themselves to learn from the Catholic Church, which knows more of the subject than anybody can teach her.

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## The Nation and The Athenæum

5 John Street, Adelphi, W.C.2

Cutting from issue dated 14 FEB 1905 192

## PROCRUSTES IN THE SCHOOLROOM.

An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education. By  
CHARLOTTE M. MASON. (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d.)

In the Middle Ages people had very little knowledge of the workings of the human body. The circulation of the blood, the action of the lungs, the nervous system, the processes of generation were all complete mysteries. So long as the functions necessary to life and health could be carried on by Nature unaided, this ignorance was, of course, immaterial; but directly health was menaced or broke down difficulties arose. Medical advisers had no means of knowing whether a sufferer was bewitched, poisoned, or suffering from appendicitis. Unaided by diagnosis, their treatment was necessarily empirical. They were obliged simply to try various experiments in the desperate hope that something would cure the patient before death supervened; they naturally began with methods that had traditionally been successful in like cases, before going on to original and more doubtful inventions. It is true that a great deal of medicine is still empirical, but not all; and as a delightful consequence it is no longer essential to wrap a fever patient in scarlet flannel, to gather plants for the pharmacopoeia by the light of the waxing moon, or to concoct drugs from animal excrements.

Teachers, alas! have not yet emerged into the dim twilight realm of doctors. The workings of the human mind are unknown to us, though it is possible that we may be on the verge of important discoveries. At present we are groping in a fog; and if some of us are timidly clinging to the coat-tails of the last member of a long procession, determined to err, if we must err, in company of as many as possible, others are dashing away from the beaten tracks enthusiastically certain that whatever is, is wrong.

After all, however little we know of psychology and child psychology, we must act. Children must be taught. The law insists upon it, and there is a general agreement that education is desirable. But how and what to teach are mysteries on which there is at present no consensus of opinion.

Medicine, in her period of darkness, sometimes attempted to simplify her difficulties by the discovery of a panacea. Mistletoe or the great valerian would cure any person of any disease—or if not one of these, doubtless such a plant might be found, if sought for with sufficient care. The same tendency is very visible among educational reformers to-day. Eurythmics, a Montessori method, a Dalton plan, a Dramatic method, a Play Way, the Clastics or the direct method—any one of these is claimed by its founder as the one and only way to teach, and often resorted to by the miserable student in the delusive hope that it will make a good teacher of a bad one.

Miss Charlotte M. Mason was the happy discoverer of such a method. She had found out *how to teach*, and fortunately the system could be applied in every kind of school, elementary, secondary, or continuation, and by every kind of teacher, trained or untrained, class-teacher,

governess, or parent. The children have merely to read a page or a chapter *once* and then narrate it. This will teach history, geography, science, composition, modern languages, ethics, and spelling. All that is necessary is to make the right selection of books; the selection was formerly made for all children taught on this method by Miss Mason herself, and is no doubt now done by the staff of the House of Education at Ambleside.

Such is the kernel of the education of which we now have the philosophy. It is curious and interesting to see how the idea is extended to studies where reading and narrating might seem inapplicable. We are told, for instance, how to teach art. "Children should have their artistic powers cultivated, especially those who have such powers, but *how*, is the question. . . children should learn pictures, line by line, group by group, by reading, not books, but pictures themselves. . . After a short story of the artist's life and a few sympathetic words about his trees or his skies, his river paths or his figures, the little pictures [reproductions] are studied one at a time. . . Then the picture is turned over and the children tell what they have seen—a dog driving a flock of sheep along a road, but nobody with the dog. Ah, there is a boy lying down by the stream drinking. . . and so on.

Mathematics is a harder nut to crack with the tongs of reading and narrating. It is clear that Miss Mason was not interested in this subject, and hardly believed that other people were. Her suggestion as to its place in the continuation school is illuminating: ". . . so much has been done in the elementary school already that probably the keeping of fictitious account books would be sufficient exercise for young people who show some mathematical talent."

The fact is that Miss Mason was, above all, an enthusiast for literature, and no doubt she herself, like so many educational prophets and reformers, produced by her method wonderful results. But that it should be the way to teach for all teachers, all children, all schools; that in this way and this way alone are we to find educational salvation, is preposterous. Not this bed, nor any other in the dormitory of Professor Procrustes, is the one on which to seek repose. The mere fact that we receive so many pressing invitations to sink down upon one or other of them is merely a sign that the science of education has not yet been born.



*Edmund 250mc268*

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### Leicester Mail

10 Belvoir Street, Leicester.

Cutting from issue dated.....*20 Feb*.....192

#### THE CHILD AS A PERSON.

##### Parents Point of View Before Hinckley Teachers.

A special meeting of the Hinckley branch of the National Union of Teachers on Wednesday night was addressed by Miss Pennethorpe, the organising secretary of the Parents' National Education Union. Teachers were present from other parts of the county and from Warwickshire.

Miss Pennethorpe claimed that the child was a person who had a right to develop all sides of its nature. There were such things as mental hunchbacks, and to prevent a one-sided development all means of acquiring knowledge should be open to the child. It was not necessary, neither was it wise, to close certain doors because a child's parents happened not to possess a long purse. Education did not finish when a man had been taught to earn his living. He needed educating to enable him to use his leisure wisely.

On the motion of Miss Ismay, the speaker was warmly thanked for her delightful address.

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### Church Times

7 Portugal Street, Kingsway, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated.....2 FEB 1922

#### MISS MASON'S BOOK.

Sir,—I consider the recent review of Miss Mason's book, "An Essay Towards the Philosophy of Education," very inadequate and misleading, and in the latter part the criticism of her religious convictions is most uncharitable and thoroughly damaging to her educational scheme. It suggests that she did not believe in Sacraments, nor in the Blessed Sacrament itself, which is a truly gross misrepresentation of her teaching and belief.

If she proclaimed the Bible to be "the oracle of God and our sole original source of knowledge concerning the nature of God," why should your reviewer imply that she therefore believed in no Church or Prayer Book? Does the Church herself deny that the Bible is the source of her own teaching and knowledge? Miss Mason was truly great in her humility, and she loved all her children in our Lord; and her scheme of education is for the development of the whole man being based upon deep spiritual truths.

Your reviewer makes the Catholic Church sound anything but humble and beautiful in the concluding remarks. I am a Catholic, and my daughter was trained at Ambleside, and her faith is strengthened and enriched by the reality and beauty of the Religious life there, and she had every encouragement

to make her Communion weekly. I have another daughter who is at one of the Wantage Schools, and who is looking forward to going to the House of Education next year; and I, as a Catholic, am sending her with every confidence that her spiritual life will be in no way hindered but enriched by that all-pervading spirit of Charity which was the life and soul of the late beloved founder of the Parents' National Educational Union.

I maintain that the review is most mischievous, and had I read it apart from my own knowledge and experience, I should certainly not have sent anyone to Ambleside; nor should I, as a Churchwoman, have engaged a student from there, as the article implies that Miss Mason was not a Churchwoman.

(Mrs.) E. F. DUNCAN.

Bridell Lodge, Regent's Park,  
Southampton.

Our reviewer writes:—I am glad to know that a Catholic lady has sent her daughter to Ambleside, and that she has found nothing in the tone and atmosphere of the House of Education injurious to her Catholicism. It was, however, Miss Mason's book which was reviewed, and the statements made about it are fair comment on what it actually contains.

So far from "suggesting" or making "truly gross misrepresentations" about Miss Mason's beliefs, the review quotes one sentence from the book: "Thinking material have little effect upon mind." That is a statement of a false principle. It is in flat contradiction to all experience and to the Church's whole sacramental system. The sentences immediately before it, on page 29 of Miss Mason's book, are equally mischievous. "The way to mind is a quite direct way. Mind must come into contact with mind through the medium of ideas." If this means anything at all, it means the false spirituality which is the very essence of Protestantism.

The section of the book in which Miss Mason deals with the knowledge of God is vague and unsatisfactory. There is no mention of the teaching authority of the Church, or of the very serious danger of studying Holy Scripture divorced from the interpretation which Catholic tradition puts upon it. We are told that dogmatic teaching finds its way to children by inference through a quiet realization of the Bible records. Not only is the characteristically Catholic view of life ignored, but the exaggerated emphasis on the freedom and personality of the undeveloped and the untalented, which is characteristic of this book and of the P.N.E.U. generally, is definitely anti-Catholic.

Your correspondent writes feelingly about Charity. I assume that she feels charitably towards your reviewer, but, if so, she dissembles her feelings strangely. "Uncharitable and misleading implications," "mischievous," "gross misrepresentations," are charges that would hurt more if they were supported by the facts. The review was short because to have said more could only have been to condemn its whole outlook more emphatically.



For

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**Daily News**

19-22 Boulevard Street, E.C.4.

Cutting from issue dated

22 FEB. 1925

**BOOKS AND AUTHORS.****THE TEACHER.****SOME DANGERS OF IDEALISM.**

By JOHN PHILLIPS.

"An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education." By Charlotte M. Mason. Kegan Paul. 10s. 6d.

I was present the other day at a conference between representatives of a trade federation and persons engaged in a certain branch of education. The president of the federation, in welcoming us, said: "Gentlemen, you are idealists." I sometimes wonder how much the cause of education has suffered from the reputation for idealism which its adherents enjoy. To the average man an idealist is someone who wants what in this imperfect world he will never get, so that to call him an idealist is to consign his ideas to the limbo of the unattainable. Teaching itself is one of the most practical forms of human activity; hence I can only put down to natural reaction the otherwise curious fact that teachers, as soon as they take up their pens or open their mouths on the subject of their craft, tend to lose contact not only with the earth, but also with their fellow-citizens. The resulting loss of public interest in educational development and of confidence in its advocates has been, and still is, the main obstacle to progress. It is of little use to hitch our waggon to stars if their loads drop back to earth in the process.

**Miss Mason's Essay.**

The late Miss Charlotte Mason was not merely a brilliant teacher, but by her work in connection with the Parents' National Education Union she made a powerful attack on public apathy at its most vulnerable point. It is the more disappointing, therefore, to find that when she puts her ideas on paper she also tends to float off into the clouds, whither few but the elect will attempt to follow her. This essay is more in the nature of a statement of faith than a philosophical treatise. As a record of the ideas which came to a great teacher in the course of many years' practical experience it will be of permanent value to all educationalists, but as a scientific analysis and synthesis of these ideas such as might properly form the basis of a philosophy it has obvious limitations. It is difficult to understand how anyone who holds that reason is not a safe instrument by which to test ideas can set out to construct a philosophy at all. It is not surprising, therefore, to find philosophical terms used in strange ways. For instance, Miss Mason speaks of knowledge as some objective form of mental pabulum, and does not apparently believe that it can be derived from sensation at all.

Then again she accepts the definition of education as "the science of relations," but interprets this to mean that the child has natural relations with a vast number of things and thoughts. Surely there is more in it than that? Does it not rather imply that the main function of education is to train the mind not only to perceive sensations, but also the relations between sensations?

Even on purely educational grounds, some of Miss Mason's theories do not explain the facts of experience. Her faith in the infinite possibilities of child nature has led her to the doubtful conclusion that the educability of children

is but little dependent on such circumstances as heredity or environment. The teacher in the slum school is not always able to rate these influences so lightly, nor does one need to be an ardent Montessoriian to utter a mild protest against her neglect of education by the senses. The trouble with Miss Mason's child is that viewed through her philosophical glasses he becomes, like Emile, an abstraction. Child nature in favourable circumstances may grasp general principles easily at an early age, and may show a desire for the best literature, and nothing but the best. The warning against too much "coming down to the child's level" is timely: on the other hand, the actual children in many of our schools do find considerable difficulty with general principles (e.g. in grammar or deductive geometry), and do exhibit a baffling catholicity of taste. To the teacher with a class of sixty "all knowledge for all men" may well seem an ideal impossible of attainment (while to the ordinary layman the chronicles of the House of Education at Ambleside seem as remote as *News from Nowhere*). I should, however, be very unwilling to close what I am afraid is a rather unappreciative notice of the last work of a great woman without some recognition of that faith in the perfectibility of human nature which illumines every page of it. There is much here to help on their way even those who find it necessary to take a sternly practical view of the function of education.

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### Church Times

7 Portugal Street, Kingsway, W.C.2.

Cutting from issue dated.....27 FEB 1925.....192

#### THE LATE MISS MASON.

Sir,—My object in writing about the offending paragraph in the review of Miss Mason's book was to defend her as a Churchwoman. I, in common with many other Catholics, felt that the article implied that she believed neither in Church, Sacraments, nor Prayer Book; and as such it was indeed a "gross misrepresentation." Also the concluding paragraph suggested that she lacked humility, and it was impossible to let so uncharitable an implication pass unchallenged about a truly beautiful and humble Christian, who was a loyal and staunch Churchwoman.

G. F. DUNCAN.

Southampton.

Sir,—As one who has read *The Church Times* regularly and with the greatest interest for eighteen years, I beg you to make known what I have to say of the late Miss Mason, whom I knew for twenty-five years—as a child in her school, then as a student in her college, and for many years as a P.N.E.U. teacher.

As a Catholic, I endorse everything that Mrs. Duncan has said in connexion with the review of Miss Mason's book in your paper. I wish to add that Miss Mason herself, so far from disregarding "individual religious experience," as your reviewer assumes, sought and proved it to a depth which we fully appreciate, and which many, perhaps most of us, are still striving to reach.

Miss Mason was a Churchwoman all her life: she made her Communion regularly and frequently, and spent at least one hour at the beginning of every day in meditation.

Those to whom, like myself, Miss Mason spoke privately before Confirmation, know what she thought of the Sacraments. The growing influence of her life's work is the direct outcome of very definite religious experience.

For the value of the educational methods put forth by Miss Mason, it would be well worth while at any time, and particularly so in these days of growing dissatisfaction, to inquire into and to compare their results from children of all ages and classes, with those of the average school curriculum.

K. M. CLENDINNEN.

Windermere.

[We printed a review of Miss Mason's book, not a criticism of her fine character or her educational work.—Ed.]



For

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## Times of India

Bombay, and 187 Fleet Street, E.C. 4.

Cutting from issue dated 28 MAR 1925 192

### SUNNIER SCHOOLS.

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION. By Charlotte M. Mason. (Kegan Paul) 10s. 6d. net.

The late Miss Mason was the prophet of the P.N.E.U. (Parents' National Educational Union) and like all prophets, from Isaiah onwards, she was an enthusiast and inclined to over-emphasise a particular aspect of the case. None the less, the P.N.E.U. has certainly achieved some admirable results and there is much good sense as well as eloquence, in Miss Mason's plea.

We are all reacting vigorously nowadays, in educational matters, from the dreadful memories of our own school days, a quarter or half a century ago—memories of mathematical masters who stood in front of blackboards, working sums, whereof they wholly obscured our view till the dust came into play and wiped them out; of French masters with the book of the gardener's wife; of historians with their processions of dated kings, a procession of which no boy ever reached the end; of the practice generally of setting lessons in so many pages, and "hearing" them in so many questions. Miss Mason reacted earlier than most, and on a line of her own. She is not wholly sympathetic with Play Ways and Dalton Plans, Morris Dances and Eurythmics and Manual Training, and the rest, as substitutes for the ordered acquisition of a body of knowledge. She insists on the need for acquiring knowledge, a point in which many parents of to-day find their children sadly below their own remembered standard, however much more stimulating the modern teaching may be.

Knowledge the citizen of the world must, sooner or later acquire, and better sooner than later. A pleasantly intelligent mind is not a sufficient equipment, nor is it a sufficient return for the time and money we spend on our children's education. Miss Mason's method is open to the objection that in trying to cover a very wide field, the pupil will almost certainly leave some extensive tracts very imperfectly surveyed. As with some of the other modern methods, there is grave danger lest, in leaving so much to the pupils' choice, certain unappetizing facts and processes may not be accurately learned. No breadth of knowledge can atone for a failure to acquire, at an early age, complete and easy mastery of the tools of a general education. Wide reading is an edifice we can construct later. The other is a foundation wherein we cannot easily fill in the holes when the house is building.

### THE WELL LOVED TEACHER.

But Miss Mason's pupils, though exposed to this danger, need not necessarily fall into it. This is where the skilful examiner has, in elementary stages, his great usefulness. He will detect the holes and direct them to be filled in. Certainly Miss Mason's doctrine is attractive. She deprecates the intrusion of an alien personality into a child's growing mind, particularly she warns us against that danger, to the school girl more than to the school boy, the too well loved teacher. Her plea is here very much that of the wise old bachelor, Ellis, who wrote, "A child's nature is too serious a thing to admit of its being regarded as a mere appendage to another being." "Children are persons," Miss Mason again and again insists. Teachers, indeed, drop into the background, except as story-tellers, in her ideal school. Books and pictures are her chief sources of knowledge, in default, as it were, of direct experience of life, and these must be the very best. She objects to writing down to children. No other mind can foresee what a particular child will accept or reject; the natural appetite will accept what it requires. Therefore give it the Classics of its language and let it browse.

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## Universe and Catholic Weekly

Effingham House, Arundel Street, W.C.

Cutting from issue dated 17 APR. 1925

## Reviews.

LEARNERS AND  
TEACHERS.EDUCATION AN ATMOSPHERE. A  
DISCIPLINE, AND A LIFE.

Learners and teachers are the only two parties concerned in education. We put the learners first because the child begins learning long before it is taught anything. And the strongest wish is to go on learning in its own way. This fundamental fact is often overlooked by those who teach. We find it is recognised by a writer who has written wisely and widely on teaching, and who, though not of the Church, bases her methods upon religion and morality. In *An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education*, by Miss Charlotte M. Mason (Kegan Paul, 10s. 6d. net), the author develops her ideas with elaborate comment and wide illustration in this well-written, good-sized volume, which is full of fine and fruitful thought (with some of which we cannot agree), reading and experience.

The key foundation stone of her philosophy is: "Children are born persons." It is that "personality" of a child from its birth with which we have to deal in its training and teaching. Each individual child presents the problem of its own personality for our solution. There are no two exactly alike, and though children, for convenience, have to be grouped together in classes, the principle of a separate and distinct personality in each little one must be admitted and acted upon to achieve success. As flowing from this basic idea Miss Mason rightly states that "Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a life," which is undeniable.

The atmosphere in which an unconscious baby begins its life must, obviously, have deep and far-reaching effects upon its growth in every way. For atmosphere, in this sense, includes all those many influences of sight and sound that come upon its opening intelligence from the surroundings of its cradle. We may sum these up as forming a happy home where the young child unconsciously absorbs its first lessons through its love. In this Christian atmosphere example is all. Father and mother, by their words and actions, are unconsciously moulding the growing mind of their little child, who sees and hears and understands much more than many think from its earliest years. Ideas enter the infant intelligence and imagination during the time of the brain's growth and remain there fruitfully long before it has the power of speech. So the child is silently developing from within under the influence of this atmosphere and living example.

The child is always learning new things, and it is for parents to take care that these are the right things. But there is no need to talk down to what we think is its mental level. The dignity and personality of a little child should always be regarded and respected. The influences of the home atmosphere and of what we call discipline merge into each other. Training is all a matter of acquiring right habits. That will mostly come by imitation, which, beginning under the atmosphere of home, should continue in the school. Both these great influences for good should work together in helping the self-teaching of the growing child and preparing it for that larger school of life.

We have no space in which to consider education as dealt with by Miss Mason in this full and fertile work. We believe in her main principle that the wish to learn with which the child is born can be raised up to the will to learn. If this wish or will is, and in the child is taken by the teacher as the guiding star of his work it will lead him aright. Children all learn best when they are not consciously being taught. If learners and teachers would only work together on the basis of their common desire to get knowledge, the whole problem of education would solve itself.

F. W.



For

Parents Ed.

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Christian Science Monitor

Cutti

Boston, Mass

JUN 2 4 1925

# A Philosophy of Education

An Essay Towards the Philosophy of Education, by Charlotte M. Mason. London: Kegan Paul. 10s. 6d. net.

THE last contribution of Miss Mason, the founder in England in 1887 of the Parents' National Educational Union, to the subject to which her life had been devoted, has just been published by her executors. Some will doubtless carp at the title of a "philosophy" of education. Some will say, and with justice, that there is much repetition. The book has been printed without thorough revision and compression; no doubt the executors were guided more by respect and esteem than by hard-headed business considerations.

Some of the pundits will say, as they have said in the past, that Miss Mason's ideal is practicable only for children of the well-to-do. They will be overlooking the fact, more than once repeated by her, that though her ideas were in the first instance conceived for home education in better class families, they were afterward applied most successfully for several years in the elementary school of a mining village in one of England's most backward counties. Since the foundation of the P. N. E. U. in 1887, her methods have been increasingly adopted until today they are practiced in more than 300 elementary schools, as well as in many homes and private schools.

Our errors in education, says Miss Mason, turn upon the conception we form of thought. "The theory which has filtered through to most teachers implies the out-of-date notion of the development of faculties, a notion which itself rests on the axiom that thought is no more than a function of the brain. This latter in its turn is the cause of the scanty curricula provided in most of our

schools and of the fatal standpoint that it does not matter what a child learns, but only how he learns it. . . . What we want is a philosophy of education which, admitting that thought alone appeals to mind, that thought begets thought, shall relegate to their proper subsidiary places all those sensory and muscular activities which are supposed to afford intellectual as well as physical training. . . . The chief function of education is an establishment of such ways of thinking in children as shall issue in good and youthful living, clear thinking, æsthetic enjoyment, and above all in the religious life."

Miss Mason says in effect: Build on the innate desire of the child for knowledge. Do away with marks and prizes, which arouse only wrong desires such as avarice and vanity. Have no fear that the literary language of good books will be a stumbling-block: "a delight in literary form would appear to be native to children until their present system of education educates them out of it." Allow only a single reading. Going over the same ground again and again is as effective a method of producing lethargy as are long-winded explanations. As a single reading becomes the tradition, attention will increase, subject matter will be better remembered and at the same time the question of discipline will solve itself.

The system secures attention, interest, concentration without effort on the part of teacher or taught, and children thus educated have responded in a surprising way, developing capacity, character, initiative, and a sense of responsibility. Outsiders have been astonished at the results so obtained, and pupils at schools adopting the system fully showed a perceptible increase in capacity within a very short time.

For

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## The London Mercury

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JULY 1925  
1925

## EDUCATION

AN ESSAY TOWARDS A PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION: A LIBERAL  
EDUCATION FOR ALL. By CHARLOTTE M. MASON. Kegan Paul. 10s. 6d.

"TWO voices are there," as a late member of St. John's College, Cambridge, did not fail to remark, and later had the remark turned against him by a King's man. Without admitting the duality of utterance as a general truth, we can at least agree that in education there are two voices with a vengeance. One is the voice of those who profess and call themselves educationists, the other the voice of those who make our laws, and give (at length) their reasons for the same. Both kinds of utterance should be chronicled for the edification of our posterity.

In the House of Commons recently, Sir Alfred Butt, a gentleman not unassociated with places of amusement,

asked whether instruction in the addressing of letters, the use of the Post Office Directory, the use of the telephone, the giving of change, and other simple duties of business life, is given in elementary schools in London and other large towns. (*New Schoolmaster*, March, 1925).

You see? We need not discuss whether instruction in these activities should or should not be given; the important fact is the spirit behind the demand. Sir Alfred Butt demands that the instruction given to children shall be good for him, whether it is good for them being unimportant. In short, he demands that elementary education, that is, education up to the age of fourteen, shall be directed towards the making of office boys.

Now the "simple duties of business life" must be learned in business, and cannot be learned anywhere else. Likewise the simple duties of a plumber's life must be learned in a plumber's shop, and cannot be learned anywhere else. We must be very sharp with the people who think that the early stages of schooling should, or can, be used for the production of premature clerks and mechanics. People like Sir Alfred Butt are usually very hard on the skilled workers because they appear unwilling to take apprentices. Sir Alfred Butt is equally unwilling. He wants other people to do the troublesome part of the job for him, and present him with the finished article. The employers, like the unemployed, are unwilling to work—if they can get comfortably out of it.

Teachers themselves are liable to Sir Alfred Butt's complaint. If they specialise in some school "subject," as Sir Alfred Butt specialises in business, they expect to find pupils fully prepared for them in the art of note-taking, or reading, or observing, or calculating, and they grumble bitterly when they have to contribute their own part to the general apprenticeship. You can almost hear them saying, "Have these boys

been given instruction in the simple duties of scientific life?" (Any other "—ic" can be substituted according to taste.)

One other legislative utterance needs nothing but bare reference. Discussion would spoil its perfection. The gravest evil in England at the moment is unemployment. But, terrible as the evil is, we need not despair. The cause and cure have been discovered by a Noble Lord. On March 18, 1925 (one should be exact about these great occasions) Lord Banbury declared in the House of Lords that the cause of unemployment was the bad education given to children in the elementary schools. An ordinary person might therefore suppose that the remedy is to give them a better one. He would be wrong. Lord Banbury's solution is to shorten school life. Let the children be taught a trade at school (he says), and let them leave earlier to practise it. Then there would be no more unemployment. We gather that the little fellows cry to go to work, and that the mines and factories cry for little children to come in and be happy, as in the good old times. But courage, Lord Banbury! Don't be afraid of humanitarians. Let us do the thing thoroughly. Let us be true to the ideals of "Merrie England." Let us abolish all the Factory Acts and the Education Acts, and let the Cry of the Children be heard again in the land!

It is a descent to come from the financial heights of Lord Banbury to the mere ideals of the late Charlotte Mason. Miss Mason was a remarkable woman who did much to raise the standard of daily practical education. She insisted on the doctrine enunciated earlier by Anatole France in a delightful paragraph, that it is only by liking what we do that we ever really learn anything. Miss Mason went further. She organised liking into a system and adapted it to the daily life of the class room. The spirit of her work was entirely beneficent, and it came like a breeze from the hills into the stuffy elementary schools. She taught the Code-bound teachers how even elementary education might be liberalised. Our moneyed classes talk indignantly of "class hatred" and "class war" as something devised by wicked trades unionists. They are wrong. The class war is begun in the class rooms of the elementary schools, and it is begun by the moneyed classes themselves. From the elementary schools our tradesmen have sedulously tried to banish everything that makes for grace, beauty, joy, and personal dignity. By tradesmen I mean persons engaged in trade, whether they are peers who sell money or newspapers or beer, or local fishmongers and grocers calling themselves "The Little Piddington Chamber of Commerce." The children who have been defrauded of the humanising and civilising influences of education naturally grow into the men who want to destroy the defrauders. Foulon, who told the people to eat grass, had grass stuffed into his dead mouth; and yet our Foulons learn nothing.

Miss Mason saw that education is an atmosphere, a discipline, and a form of living, and she strove to make this the basis of school work. How she worked it out as a practical scheme is of professional rather than of general interest, and need not be discussed here. This, her last volume, contains matter that could be disputed, and even confuted; but we should take it for the good it contains. The danger at the moment is that enthusiastic disciples are threatening to turn Miss Mason into a Mrs. Baker Eddy.



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Dated

Address of Journal

**PARENTS AND  
EDUCATION**

**Miss Mason's Work**

SIR,—May I say that I have read your article in the CATHOLIC HERALD with gratitude and with appreciation? We feel that you have done the work of the Union great service in calling attention to Miss Mason's work, and especially to her insistence on the importance of parents in the education of children, and the value that Miss Mason sets upon the use of living books and the right use of language.

I wonder, may I add one or two points in connection with "Charlotte Masonites would disclaim any idea of a special P.N.E.U. method"? Miss Mason founded her work here in 1891, at the age of 50, in the hope of establishing certain educational principles which she had gathered in thirty years' experience with children and young people, both in schools and at a training college. I enclose a synopsis of her educational philosophy, because the practices to which you refer result from certain discoveries with regard to the nature and the working of mind, "the way of the will" and "the way of the reason." These discoveries she made in connection with her study of children and the endowment that every child brings into the world as a person, and his possibilities for good and for evil.

Moreover, she insisted that children must not be deprived of any of their rights as regards knowledge, for any personal reasons on the part of the teacher; that knowledge in three kinds was due to all children—knowledge of God, knowledge of man, and knowledge of the world—and that the omission of any one of these prevented the child from taking up his full inheritance and necessary preparation for life.

Miss Mason put the knowledge of God first of all, for every child, because, as all those who know children realise, they bring with them a natural affinity with matters of the spirit, and quite small children show a comprehension of matters that are often a problem to their elders.

She wrote many books, dealing with education at home, schooling, the duties of parents in their position of deputed authority and as inspirers, and *Ourselves*, a book of ethics for children from about twelve years old. Miss Mason also published a commentary in verse upon the Gospels, the outcome of her Sunday meditations with her students, and when these volumes appeared they were very highly reviewed in the *Tablet*.

A few months after she opened the "Parents' Union School," she received the first students in her training college at Ambleside. The college was founded in answer to a request for teachers trained in her method.

Her last book, *An Essay Towards a Philosophy of Education*, which she left unpublished at her death, gives a series of chapters, each one dealing with a clause of her educational philosophy.

E. KITCHING.

The Parents' Union School, Ambleside.